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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR LAUNCHES "ESPOIR" PROGRAM TO
HIGHLIGHT USG COMMITMENT TO COMBATING SGBV

REF: STATE 120322

¶1. Summary: On December 10 Ambassador Garvelink, together with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Gender Issues, launched USAID's "ESPOIR" project as the main event of the UN's 16 Days of Activism to Combat Violence Against Women. Linked to Secretary Clinton's announcement to provide \$17 million to assist survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), the event attracted wide media coverage in Kinshasa and the eastern Kivu provinces. Embassy Kinshasa will sustain the effort to highlight the U.S. commitment to combating SGBV through a variety of outreach activities. End summary.

ESPOIR launch

¶2. Ambassador Garvelink presided over the December 10 to launch "ESPOIR," \$7 million USAID project to assist survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in the Eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Deputy Prime Minister Emile Bongeli and Marie-Ange Lukiana, Minister of Gender, Children and Family Issues, also participated in the event. In his remarks, Bongeli noted that "Violence against women and girls in the DRC has not only been used as a weapon of war by armed groups, but also as a real obstacle to peace and security in the country." Ambassador Garvelink noted to the audience (which consisted of GDRC and international officials, NGO representatives, and press) that nearly 15,000 vulnerable girls and women will receive assistance in the provinces of North and South Kivu.

¶3. Note: ESPOIR, French for "hope," is the acronym for Ending Sexual Violence by Promoting Individual Rights. Implemented by the International Rescue Committee, the project includes support for clinics, hospitals, community centers for women and children, and mental health services through its partnerships with seven Congolese NGOs and 65 health facilities in North and South Kivu provinces. A total of 45 community-based groups in the targeted provinces will also receive assistance to help individuals and families regain their livelihoods. It was announced by Secretary Clinton during her August 10-11 trip to the DRC. End note.

¶4. The announcement of the ESPOIR project received wide attention in the local press. USAID Mission Director Stephen Haykin's interview with Radio Okapi was aired several times. The newspapers L'Avenir, La Prosperite, La Reference Plus, and Le Potentiel all ran articles based on the Embassy's press release. In Goma and Bukavu, Assistant Public Affairs Officer Satrajit Sardar provided Embassy's press release to local and regional media outlets (in VOA, RTNC's Goma office, and Digital Congo's Goma Bukavu office) on December 10, which promptly reported the press release to local audiences. Post also highlighted the ESPOIR project in a December 23 op-ed -- under the Ambassador's byline -- that addressed the issue of SGBV in the

specific context of the DRC. Three key pro-government newspapers published the op-ed, which used reftel's proposed language.

Other planned outreach activities

15. As UNICEF has indicated they will continue promotion of the 16 days of activism following December 10, Embassy Kinshasa will support this effort by highlighting the U.S. commitment to combating SGBV in the DRC and women's empowerment. PAS Kinshasa will use the American Corner at the Protestant University of Congo (UPC) to program activities that raise awareness of SGBV, as was done on November 25, when American Corner staff showed Lisa Jackson's "The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo" to UPC students. PAS Kinshasa is also finalizing the list of candidates to participate in Post's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) on SGBV. Embassy Kinshasa plans to send GDRC officials and civil society leaders on a three-week program to the United States to consult with U.S. counterparts and visit victim care facilities and local judicial institutions. Post will also use their weekly PEPFAR-funded television behavior change communication platform Rien Que La Verite as part of a larger awareness campaign nationwide.

16. In addition, Post will continue to publicly highlight the launch of additional assistance efforts that constitute the Secretary's pledge in August to provide \$17 million in assistance to the DRC. Given questions among local audiences on how the \$17 million will be disbursed, it will be critical to effectively explain the nature of the assistance, and demonstrate the U.S. commitment to this effort. Embassy Kinshasa sections and agencies will work together to publicize this assistance program and address any questions or

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concern that emanate from local audiences.

17. Finally, Embassy will continue to promote its programs that focus on underlying factors of SGBV and the broader issue of gender empowerment. We plan to highlight the benefits of the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP), as well as the Embassy's Access micro-scholarship program, by publicizing individual students who have benefited from the program. We also plan to highlight HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment programs that assist women and children. Post will continue to highlight Department of Defense (DOD) programs combating impunity among the ranks of the DRC armed forces (FARDC) through military justice and rule of law programs and rehabilitating institutions that treat SGBV victims.

GARVELINK